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EVANGELICAL BUDDHISM.

By MERWIN-MARIE SNELL,
Chicago.

Primitive Buddhism atheistic — Its relation to Hindu philosophies — Modification of reincarnation doctrine — Nirvâna — Means of attaining it — Theory exclusively ethical. — Council of Vai'sali — Gradual re-introduction of metaphysical speculation — Return of Mahâyâna to Hindu theory. — Worship of future Saviour in Hinayâna — This phase still atheistic. — First Japanese sects ethical; following ones contemplative; modern sects "evangelical" — Japanese classification of Buddhist sects — True wisdom class — Pure Land class. — Jodo Shu and Shin Shu "evangelical" — Derived from Aï'svârîka school of Nepal — Âdi-Buddha — Quintuple Logos — Celestial incarnations of the Logoi — Emanation of Gautama. — Amitâbha sutras — Jodo sect A.D. 641; Shin sect A.D. 1224 — Theism of Jodo and Shin — The Buddhas — Descent of Amitâbha — the Atonement — Salvation by faith — Alternative — Jodo doctrine of works. — Shin Shu doctrines: — Present salvation — Acknowledgment of sin and helplessness required — Sâkyamuni — Trust — Free grace — Repetition of Amitâbha's name — Beautiful similes — Joy and peace — Fruits of conversion — Final perseverance — The Western Paradise — Prohibition of magic — Prayer — The wonder of salvation. — Cui bono? — Significance of these facts.

THERE is no doubt that the primitive form of Buddhism was practically atheistic. It did not trouble itself to deny the ordinary assumptions of Hindu thought, such as reincarnation, the universality of law, and gods and mythical beings of various kinds, but it did explicitly deny both the utility and legitimacy of inquiries regarding the existence and nature of Deity and of soul. With the Vai'seshika philosophy it recognizes the supremacy of Act-force (Karma = Adrishta) — which, however, it tended less to personify — and in the spirit of the Sâmkhya and even of the Vedânta, aimed primarily at extinction of desire and the consequent liberation from earthly sorrows which constitutes Nirvâna and is attainable in this life. More and more explicitly refusing to recognize the existence of the soul as an entity distinct from the body, it gave to the doctrine of reincarnation an entirely new form, considering it merely as the production of one life by the past deeds of another entirely separate one, analogous to the

building up of vegetable or animal organism out of the scattered remnants of preceding ones. Nirvâna soon came to be looked upon as a final destruction of conscious existence in a chain of beings instead of a speedily attainable state of the individual mind. The means to the attainment of either the terrestrial or cosmic Nirvâna being the abolition of the ignorance which is the root of desire or attachment, the primitive Buddhism might be enrolled as a form of the *jñâna-mârga*, or "way of salvation by knowledge. And yet as it means by "the destruction of ignorance" nothing more than the recognition of the importance of a certain course of action, and refuses to concede the possibility or advantage of any knowledge of higher powers or universal essences, it must be assigned to the *karma-mârga*, "the way of salvation by works," not in the sense of the ceremonial exactitudes of the *Brâhmanas* and *Sutras*, which it entirely discards, but in that of an aim and method exclusively ethical. But the speculations of which Gautama so disapproved soon found an entrance. Especially after the Council of Vai'sâli and the *Mahâsaṅghika* schism (cir. 342, B.C.) the Buddhist Church—it would be more exact to say Order—was rent with controversies on all sorts of metaphysical as well as practical questions, and the intellectual interest soon obtained a very general predominance over the moral. The idealism of the *Dharmagupta* (a branch of the *Sarvâsti-vâda*) and *Bahu-'srutika* (a branch of the *Mahâsaṅghika*) schools prepared the way for the *Mâdhyamika*, *Yogâ'câra* and *Ai'svârîka* schools of the *Mahâyâna*, which seem to have returned in greater or less degrees to the general positions of the *Vedânta* and *Yoga* philosophies and the traditional *jñânamârga*.

Even the *Hinayâna* seemed to be threatened with a profound metamorphosis, through the worship of the *Maitreya Bodhisattva*, the Saviour (Buddha) yet to come. This cultus was widely prevalent in certain sects, and had as its immediate aim attainment to residence in the *Tushita* heaven, where *Maitreya* is supposed to reign in glory while awaiting the appointed time of his final advent upon earth. But this phase of Buddhism never ceased to be atheistic in theory, and always kept in view in its official doctrine the goal of ultimate extinction. It can hardly be doubted,

however, that it prepared the way for the theistic developments of which we are about to speak, whether or not any direct connection shall ever be shown to exist between these two phases of Buddhistic thought.

In Japan, where the sects which are to be the subject of the present article are chiefly found, several of the earliest schools were offshoots of Hinayâna sects and were chiefly ethical. But most of the ancient sects and both the mediæval ones (Tendai and Shingon) are contemplative in their character, and place the chief emphasis on knowledge, while two out of the four great modern ones (founded or introduced into Japan since the eleventh century A.D.) make trust in Buddha their cornerstone. The Japanese Buddhists divide all the schools of both Hinayâna and Mahâyâna into two groups. The Shodo-mon, or True Wisdom division, includes all the sects and schools which aim at the attainment of salvation (*moksha*) or liberation through individual exertions, or "self-power," and the Jodo-mon, or Pure Land division, comprises those which seek the same end through trust in the Saviour, or "other-power." All the Hinayâna sects — with the possible exception of one or two retaining the Maitreya cultus — and all those of the Mahâyâna which follow the way of works or the way of knowledge, belong to the True Wisdom class, and the Pure Land class is represented chiefly by the Jodo Shu and the Jodo Shin Shu or Shin Shu, which I have designated as the evangelical sects of Buddhism.

These seem to have been derived from one of the Ai'svârîka or theistic schools of northern India, now found only in Nepal and Tibet. The latter believed in an infinite self-existent Supreme Being, whom they called Âdi-Buddha. From him emanate five Dhyâni-Buddhas, or "Buddhas of contemplation," exalted formless Æons (collectively a sort of quintuple Logos), representing different aspects or elements of the divine nature, each of whom had a son or manifestation, called a Dhyâni-Bodhsattva, in a corresponding "heaven of form," — in contradistinction from the "formless heavens" in which the Dhyâni-Buddhas themselves resided — who was represented on earth by a Buddha of flesh and blood. To the earthly Buddha Gautama correspond

the Dhyâni-Bodhisattva Avalokite'svara and the Dhyâni-Buddha Amitâbha. Several works recounting the praises of Amitâbha and the glories of Sukhavatî, the heaven in which he eternally reigns, were written in India about the beginning of the Christian era, and were translated into Chinese by various scholars between the years 150 and 500 A.D. The followers of the doctrines contained in these works were gathered together by Zen Do, in A.D. 641, and by him formed into a distinct sect. This Jodo Shu (Pure Land Religion) was introduced into Japan in 1175. In 1224 Shin-ran gave a new interpretation of the Amitâbha sutras and thereupon founded the Jodo Shin Shu, or True Jodo religion, usually called True Sect (Shin Shu), which rapidly diffused itself until it has now become by far the most important and popular form of the Buddhist religion throughout the Japanese empire.

The Jodo and Shin sects consider Amitâbha (Boundless Light), also called Amitâyus (Infinite Life), as identical with the Supreme Being. He has always existed, and all other Buddhas have attained to perfect knowledge only by worshipping him, and indeed they are only his manifestations and prophets. But Amitâbha himself descended to earth immeasurable ages ago, and after sharing the sufferings of mankind for billions of years and performing countless virtuous actions, "as the scapegoat of all living beings" he returned to glory again ten kalpas (4,320,000,000 years) ago. "He became a mendicant for us, because he knew that we should be absolutely incapable of doing it ourselves" (Shin Shu Catechism, QQ. 11, 19). Amitâbha has made forty-eight great vows concerning the salvation of all those who trust in him. These vows and the glories of Amitâbha and his heaven are recorded in the greater and lesser Sukhâtivyuha or Amitâyus Sutra and the Amitâbha Dhyâni Sutra, which are the three sacred books of both the sects.

It is by faith in the words of 'Sâkyamuni recorded in those books, or rather in the promises and personality of Amitâbha revealed in them, that salvation is to be obtained.

The Holy Path is hard to travel and its outcome uncertain; but entrance to the Pure Land is sure if one will but put his whole trust in Amitâbha.

According to the Old Jodo sect those who are reborn in heaven (Sukhavatī) must practice good works there for a long time before attaining to Buddhahood and Nirvāna, though that result is sure to come in the end. They simply walk the holy path there where it is easy and its result secure, instead of here where it is beset with difficulties.

The Shin Shu conforms more closely to the Christian "evangelical" model. According to it, heaven is not merely an entrance way to Nirvāna; they who trust in Amitābha have already attained Buddhahood, and their Nirvāna is the Pure Land, where they enjoy an eternity of bliss.

To bring out more clearly the "evangelical" character of the sect let us give further examination to its doctrine of salvation by faith alone, as set forth in its official publications.

Those who aspire to salvation through the grace of Amitābha must be fully convinced of their own sinfulness, which condemns them to the sufferings of endless rebirth; and of their own helplessness to escape from these through their own power, or any other save that of Amitābha himself.

'Sākyamuni is a great teacher who directs us to Amitābha, upon whom alone our salvation depends. "He [Amitābha] does not command us to follow out any practice, or to accumulate the merit of repeating his name for our salvation, but he only says, 'Come on straight here with your whole heart and right thought.' Then, why shall we try to do what he does not command? Therefore, when his call has reached our heart enough all our ideas of self-power will be thrown off at once." (Shin Shu Catechism, Q. 54.)

The Jodo sect believes that the Pure Land may be attained by the merits attached to the repetition of the name of Amitābha in the spirit of faith; but the Shin Shu says that "even the repetition of Buddha's name is wrong, if it is desired to be born in Paradise by the merit of doing that." (Q. 53.)

Many beautiful similes, some of them quite familiar to Christian ears, are used to illustrate the relation of the believer to his Saviour. He "goes on the ship of Buddha's vow, which is able to bear him in the stormy ocean of birth and death without any

danger." "Our faith in Buddha is one with his command: Rely upon me, and I will save you.' When the moon is shining and the water is calm and without waves, there are two moons, one being in the sky above and one in the water beneath. Now Buddha's command is the moon in the sky, and our faith is that in the water. But if there is no moon in the sky, nothing can be seen in the water; so our faith is only the reflection of Buddha's vow." (Q. 39.)

The soul that has trusted in Buddha, at once enters the state of salvation, and his mind becomes bright and joyful and he feels that he has been saved from the evil path and is sure of attaining Buddhahood. The joy and peace of mind which faith brings with it naturally finds expression in the loving repetition of Amitābha's name by those who possess it, and the reproduction of his holiness in their own lives. But whatever improvement in conduct results from entering the state of salvation is to be attributed, not to the believer's merits, but solely to the grace of Amitābha.

The Shin Shu agrees with Presbyterianism in holding the doctrine of final perseverance. As soon as we have obtained true faith the operation of our salvation is finished already. The fact of losing faith after having professed conversion is positive evidence that the faith was never genuine.

Heaven, or Sukhavatī,—literally, "The Place of Happiness,"—is often spoken of as the "Western Paradise," and it is said in the North Buddhist traditions to be "over a hundred thousand kotis of Buddha-countries" distant towards the west; but the Shin theologians explain that this is not to be literally understood. It is said to be so distant [every world is a Buddha-country, so a hundred thousand kotis of Buddha-countries means ten millions of worlds] in order to intimate its vastness and supreme splendor; and it is said to be in the west, because it is desirable for purposes of meditation and devotion to be able to think of it as in some particular direction, and the direction in which the glories of the setting sun appear is the most natural and appropriate.

Many of the Buddhist sects, even some of those not pro-

fessedly affiliated to the Tântrika or Kâla 'Cakra school (which is the special home of occultism), are addicted to magic and sorcery, or at least the use of charms and spells. The Shin Shu, however, forbids all such practices, and does not even permit of supplications to any Buddha or god for the averting of temporal misfortunes or the gaining of temporal blessings. An incident related of the Shin Shu bishop Ren-nio aptly illustrates the constant spirit of the sect. One day a disciple told him that a piece of paper with the invocation *Namo Amida Butsu* (Adoration to Amitâbha Buddha) written upon it had fallen into the fire, and seemed to turn into six statues of Buddha. "What a wonderful thing it was!" he exclaimed. "That is not a wonderful thing," replied the bishop; "It is not strange that Buddha should become Buddha. The only wonderful thing is that those who are so sinful can become Buddha by a single thought of reliance upon Amitâbha."

Other Buddhist sects, ancient and modern, have shown a tendency to approximate to the type of evangelical Protestant Christianity, though probably none of them in such a marked degree.

The examples given may suffice us. The question may arise in the minds of some Christian readers, "But of what use is it to know the various aberrations of Pagan sects? What is an evangelicism with the Gospel left out—one which substitutes another name for that of Christ! Is not a Paganism that imitates the true religion so closely, and transfers all the prerogatives of Jesus Christ to a creature of the imagination, even worse and more dangerous than the undisguised idolatry which makes no pretense of competing with Christianity on its own ground?"

I answer that it is all-important for the Christian missionary to make use of these facts, which at least attest the cravings of the human soul for an endless immortality, a living Saviour, and a finished redemption; and no evangelical believer can fail to rejoice, upon second thought, that God has thus raised up independent witnesses to what he believes to be the revealed plan of salvation, in such remote and unexpected quarters.